

**Background:**

Refugees are defined by the United Nations as “persons with a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group.” Refugees differ from immigrants who come to the United States by choice for economic reasons. The Bhutanese refugees coming to Madison have gone through a multi-year processing phase that has defined them as refugees.

These refugees are part of a group of ethnic Nepalese, mostly Hindu, who kept their language and a semblance of their culture while living and working in Bhutan (Buddhist) since the 1800's. A political change in Bhutan about 20 years ago created a situation where the whole group of ethnic Nepalese was forced from Bhutan and into a refugee camp in Nepal. The community is not accepted by the Nepalese people around them and they have remained in the refugee camp since that time. The web site below goes into much more detail of how the situation has gotten to this point.

<http://www.bhutanerefugees.com/>

Below is the web address for the Lutheran Social Services Refugee Resettlement Program:

<http://www.lsswis.org/Services/UM/Refugee>